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STATEMENT BY SENATOR STROM THURMOND(D-SC) ON MILITARY TRANSPORTATION COSTS, April 13, 1955

Mr. President:

I have read with interest the stories in the newspapers concerning the Hoover Commission Report on the subject of military transportation costs. I have noticed with particular interest that the Commission states that military transportation facilities are competing extensively with private shipping and the airlines.

Among other things the news stories report that the Commission singles out for attention the so-called waste involved in the hauling of "hitchhikers" in aircraft of the Armed Services. The news story quoted the Commission as stating that there were over 4,800,000 passengers carried as "hitchhikers, - or on a leave status."

Mr. President, I yield to no one in desiring to eliminate waste, and to improve efficiency within the military services, and also to bring about a corresponding improvement in our economic structure. However, I am equally opposed to broad and sweeping generalizations which, if effective, would reduce the fringe benefits available to our military personnel. One of the most important factors in the maintenance of morale within the military service is the privilege of taking leave by its personnel. Due to the far flung locations of our military forces, such leave, if to be enjoyed frequently, requires transportation beyond the financial ability of most military personnel.

I personally feel, the question of permitting "hitchhiking" as referred to, if analyzed would be found to involve little or no cost to the government. Such transportation is normally provided on a basis of space available on flights scheduled for other purposes.

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It may be true that in some cases the individuals would have flown commercially if free military transportation were not available. It is much more likely they would not be able to get home in many more instances if military transportation were not available, because of the cost involved.

I sincerely trust, that, in implementing the generally excellent work of the Hoover Commission, ~~that~~ the point of the continuing need to encourage our military personnel to remain^{as} our active and reserve forces be considered. I believe much good is accomplished at a small comparative cost by permitting service personnel to ride military planes when extra space is available.